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Not only has every day its special character and its fixed

805 letters, but there is also a particular animal assigned to
825 symbolise it, and red or yellow wax candles are made in
782 the forms of these animals to be offered at the Pagoda by the
[527] pious. Each worshipper offers the creature-candle representing his birthday, or that of any particular friend or relation whom he wishes well. In this way Monday is represented by a tiger; Tuesday, by a lion; Wednesday, by an elephant with tusks; Yahu, by an elephant without tusks; Thursday, by a rat; Friday, by a guinea-pig; Saturday, by a nagā or dragon; Sunday, by a kalôn, the fabulous half-beast, half-bird, which guards one of the terraces of Mount Myinmo (Meru), the centre of the universe.

782 Little candles of this kind are to be had at any of the
443 stalls which cluster about the steps and the base of every pagoda in the country, and they are as freely offered as flowers, and fruits, and gold-leaf.

551 It will be seen that there is no such thing as a surname
553 among the Burmese. A man may have a dozen sons not one of whom has the same name as his father. Maung, literally "brother," has come to stand practically for "Mister." Po and Shwe and Ba may be applied to any one without regard to his birthday, Shwe implying usually politeness or affection. Nga, used in the English law-courts and by pompous native officials generally, implies superiority claimed by the speaker or writer. Ko denotes friendship, or superior age and dignity in the person addressed. Maung Shwe Than might call himself indifferently—Maung Than, Po Than, Ba Than, Ko Than, Nga Than, or Shwe Than, and might add Maung to any one of these. As a matter of fact most Burmans chop about their name a good deal during their lives. He may begin by being called Lugale Ngè, "Little Wee Man." When he grows up a little the family probably get to call him Lugale Gyi, "Big Little Man." Later, when he begins to think of his appearance and look after the girls—and they begin that sort of thing very early in Burma—he probably calls himself Maung Lugale or Shwe Lugale, "Mr. Littleman," or "Mr. Boy," or "Golden Boy." There are a variety of other changes possible and likely. Finally, when he reaches the age of thirty-five or forty he either readopts the original Ngè and calls himself

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they mutter spells and incomprehensible incantations over the "medicine," are looked up to with profound belief and a very considerable deal of awe.

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The tattooing on the loins and legs is universal with all Burmans, and nothing more is ordinarily required; but there are very few who have not charms of some kind tattooed on the arms, back, chest, or even on the top of the head, which is shaved for the purpose. These figures are of all kinds—lizards, birds, mystic words and squares, rings, images of the Buddha, and sometimes merely a few scattered dots, the latter especially on the face, between the eyes, over the ears, or on the chin. The colouring matter is almost always vermilion, with drugs and solutions, according to requirement, mingled with it. The blue dye from the lampblack never disappears, but the red colour of the vermilion gradually fades away and vanishes. Nevertheless figures of this kind, more or less distinct, are to be found on Burmans of all ages, so great is the national superstition. Even the town youths, whose limbs are smooth and "unbreeched" as a girl's, are never without some charms of this kind, if it is only the a-nu se, which enables a man to gain the woman he loves. This "drug of tenderness" is composed of vermilion mixed with a variety of herbs and curious things, prominent among which is the bruised, dry skin of the tauktè, the trout-spotted gekko, whose sonorous cry and fidelity to the house where he establishes himself and brings luck, are well known to all who have visited Burma or Siam. It is very sparingly used, a few round spots arranged in the shape of a triangle being of sufficient virtue to ensure the object aimed at. The commonest place for them is between the eyes, but occasionally the se sayā recommends the lips, or even the tongue, and his advice is always followed. This is the only tattooing which women ever have executed on them, and there are not many of them who have it done. The patient is usually a love-sick maiden who is afraid the object of her affection will escape from her, or a girl whom rolling years warn that she must be quick if she would not be condemned to remain an a-pyo heing, an old maid. Except in very desperate cases, however, they always manage to persuade the operator to place the charm on some part of the

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is far away, and there will be no rain for months. Another day or two will suffice to bake and split into long fissures the bottom of the puddle, wherein are yet hundreds of animate things, from the whiskered mud-fish to the lordly hilsa, the salmon of India. Then the seekers after merit come out, bearing with them big chatties, huge earthenware jars, the size of some of which makes the story of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* seem very much more credible. Girls and boys, old men and old women, go tramping about in the soft slush, capturing the fish and dropping them into the jars of water. Great laughter there is over the wild plunges and flounderings of the boys, the little screams and "a-mè lele, a-mè le-taw" of the girls as they step upon a fish, which whizzes away with a suddenness that is apt to disturb the equilibrium, or slip with one leg slowly but irremediably into a hole—perhaps a last year's buffalo-wallow—out of which they are only extricated after much teasing and tickling by the boys. Then there is the stalking and driving of a great nga-gyi into a corner, whence with a flop and a muddy dash he escapes into the middle again, amidst a chorus of the inevitable amè! ("mother") which springs to a Burman's lips on all possible and unexpected occasions. There is the caution to be observed in seizing the stinging mud-fish, the gingerliness with which, when he is caught, the waving whiskers are avoided; especially the control over yourself to be maintained if he does sting you, lest you should spoil all your chance of merit in a moment of irritation, by doing him an injury. Sometimes the fish are caught in nets; but this reckless wastefulness in the matter of combining merit with merriment is not very favourably viewed by the neighbourhood.

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At last the fish are all caught and crowded together in the sin-o—the water-jars. There is, perhaps, a considerable pause before they are liberated. The nga-hlut pwè usually occurs a little after the carnival of the water feast, when everybody is doused with water; and if the fish have been rescued from their danger some time before that, they have to wait in their uncomfortable quarters all the longer. The *fête* seems to be celebrated with more enthusiasm in Maulmein than in any other large town in Lower Burma.

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amusement to both native and English spectators. The fun goes on all the way with jokes at the expense both of the performers and the lookers-on, and shouts and roars of laughter at every new buffoonery. At last they reach the spot on the river-bank selected for freeing the fish, and after a few pious formulæ have been recited, the contents of the jars are capsized into the water. Many of the fish are already dead, and not a few are so sickly that there is little chance of their escaping being eaten by cannibal brethren; but this does not disturb the equanimity of any one. A great kaunghmu has been done, much merit has been gained, and there has been great fun over it. The motley procession wends its way back again, and everybody goes at nightfall to see the great kyi-gyin pwè given by some public-spirited and drama-loving quarter or street in the town.

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CHAPTER LII

THE LORD WHITE ELEPHANT

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THE importance attached to the possession of a white elephant is traceable to the Buddhist system. The form in which Gautama Buddha entered the womb of Queen Maya to be born upon earth for the last time to "teach the Law and give the millions peace" was that of a white elephant. The Saddan, or celestial elephant, was an avatar of his many existences previously. The Saddan is gifted with special endowments, and is one of the seven precious things the possession of which marks the Sekyawadé, the Mahā Chakra Vartti Raja, "the great wheel-turning king," the holy and universal sovereign—a ruler who appears in once a cycle, at the time when the waxing and waning term of human life has reached its maximum of an athinkaya (a huge period represented by a unit and 164 cyphers) in duration. Thus the possession of an undoubted white elephant stands as a sign and symbol of universal sovereignty; and every Burmese king longed for the capture of such a treasure during his reign as a token that his legitimate royalty is recognised by the unseen powers. The great river of Burma, the Irrawaddy, is named from Airawata, the elephant of Indra, a sufficient assertion of the proper dwelling-place of all his successors. Hence the reverence of the Hindoos for the animal, and their not infrequent pilgrimages to Mandalay to see the royal creature and have a dursun, or interview of worship, with him.

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All the elephants in the country, whether wild or tame, belonged to the king: whoever captured one had to give him up to the king, and he granted permission to the princes and to a few of the higher dignitaries to use them. The

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lucky discoverer of a white elephant was made a mingyi, and was exempted from taxes and burdens of every kind for the rest of his life. Red and spotted elephants were also held in great esteem.

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White crows, rats, mice, and hares are common and easily distinguished; but it is different with a white elephant. He is not to be considered as snow-white: very far from it. All the white elephants now existing in Siam and Burma are of a light mouse colour, somewhat of the same tint as the pale freckles to be found on the trunk of almost every ordinary elephant. This light grey is uniform all over, the spots on the trunk being white. The depth of the colour, however, varies greatly; and there are often blemishes in the shape of darker patches which would seem to ruin an otherwise eligible candidate's claims. It has been therefore found necessary to determine some infallible test points, which will demonstrate the right of the animal to his title. Determining white elephants is quite a science, and there is a very considerable literature on the subject. The Burmese skilled men fix upon two of these tests as superior to all others. One is that the elephant shall have five toe-nails on his hind feet instead of four. This is a good way of making certain, but occasionally there are indubitably black elephants which have the sacred number of toes. These [775] are white elephants debased by sin, labouring under the evil kan of previous existences, and therefore ineligible for the honours accorded to the real animal. The other test is considered perfectly decisive, no matter what the precise tint of the skin may be. It is this: if you pour water upon a "white" elephant he turns red, while a black elephant only becomes blacker than ever. This is the final test always resorted to in Mandalay. A swarthy specimen who had twenty toe-nails and turned red when he was washed would be forthwith installed in all the honours and emoluments of the Sinbyudaw, no matter what scoffers might say about his colour. Such a creature was the last Lord White Elephant in Mandalay. He would not have been recognised as an albino by any except those who are learned in the science and well versed in the voluminous and puzzling minutiæ of the question. To most people he seemed an impostor, for

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his colour was a mixture of light-brown and dingy, smoke-smirched cream colour. The eye, when you know it, is perhaps the best rough test for an amateur. The iris ought to be yellow, with a reddish outer annulus. The effect of this is decisive to the connoisseur, if only sinister to the outsider. But the red ring represents the circle of the nine precious gems. In other respects the Sinbyudaw was not attractive in appearance; he was very big, but, notwithstanding the care taken of him, was remarkably lean and hollow-sided. His tusks, however, were magnificent—white, smooth, and curving forward in front of his trunk so that they almost met. In his young days he was suckled by women, who stood in a long row outside his palace, and the honour was eagerly sought after, for the creature was a national pride and not merely a royal monopoly. A hundred soldiers guarded his palace, and the Sovereign of the Golden Throne himself made offerings and paid him reverence. An establishment of thirty men waited on him, and among them was a Minister of State, who managed his affairs and looked after the revenues of the province that was assigned to him to "eat." His palace stood within the inner stockade and was decorated with the royal pya-that. Every day he was bathed with scented sandal water, and all his vessels and utensils were made of gold. Troupes of the palace *coryphées* danced for his pleasure, and there were choruses of sweet-voiced singers to lull him to sleep.

Nevertheless his lordship was very bad-tempered, and his attendants were much afraid of him. Such things are, however, not unknown with human kings. On one occasion the Sinbyudaw killed a man who had ventured too near, and there was a good deal of trouble and noise before the body could be got away from him. The king—Thibaw's father—heard the commotion, and inquired what was the matter. When he was told, he expressed great concern and not a little alarm for the future state of the Lord White Elephant, with the red stain of murder on him, blotting out hosts of previous good deeds. But the elephant's minister calmed his mind and restored him to equanimity by saying, "Pray do not be disturbed, payā; lu ma hôk bu kalā—it was not a man only a foreigner."

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Probably because he was so vicious, the last Lord White Elephant was never ridden, as previous incumbents were. No one but the king himself could have ridden him; and latterly King Mindôn became very fat and feeble, while King Thibaw's nerves were not strong enough. The Sinbyudaw is king of elephants, and therefore none but a king might mount him. His royal trappings were kept in his palace, and were very magnificent. Draperies of silk and bands of rich red cloth ran from the head-stall to the back and thence to the tail, hanging in curves over the body. They were richly embroidered in gold and studded with rubies and emeralds. On the forehead was a plate of gold, recording his majesty's titles, such as was worn by every man of rank in the country up to the Arbiter of Existence himself. Bosses of pure gold and clusters of precious stones covered the head-stall, and golden tassels hung down over the ears. When he went forth to take the air, he was shaded by golden and white umbrellas. He and the king shared all the white umbrellas in the country between them. The king of men had nine; the king of elephants two, but he had also four golden ones. Not even the heir-apparent, if there were one, had a right to use the white umbrella. He had to be contented with his eight golden shades; the display of a white one would have been regarded as a declaration of rebellion, and would have resulted in his immediate execution. No wonder, then, that the attendants and visitors took off their shoes when they entered Sinbyudaw's palace, and that the people bowed down low and did humble obeisance when he passed through the streets. These were swept and sprinkled with water for him as for the King of the Golden Throne himself.

The Lord White Elephant's suite accounted for his irritable temper by the bad treatment which he met with in his early days. The royal coffers were low, and the English were clamouring for the last instalments of the Yandabo indemnity money. So the rents of the elephant were appropriated to pay off the troublesome foreigners. Every care was taken to soften the indignity. The king himself wrote a long address on a palm-leaf, requesting the Lord White Elephant not to take it amiss that his revenues were devoted

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to the payment of the barbarians. In any case he should not suffer, for the whole sum would be refunded in two months' time. The circumstance, however, seems to have preyed on his mind, for the bodyguard said that his majesty (the elephant) had never been the same since.

There are frequent reports of the capture of white elephants, and special questing parties are sent out every now and then. But the candidates almost invariably fail to satisfy the water test, or the tail is not long enough, or the position of the eye is wrong, and the red ring is wanting. At any rate, genuine "white" elephants are very seldom found. As with the king, when the Sinbyudaw died it was not permissible to say so in as many rude words. It had to be whispered that his majesty had "departed" or "disappeared." He used to get a royal funeral.

When Mandalay was taken in 1886 the Royal White Elephant was sent down to Rangoon, where he was to have been kept in the Zoological Gardens. But he died immediately after he arrived. There has been no suggestion of the discovery of a White Elephant since.

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CHAPTER LXII

STRAY NOTES

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THERE are some curious national superstitions about the sabba-gyi or boa-constrictor. Although he is now innocuous as far as biting is concerned, he was originally the only poisonous snake. The way in which he lost his dangerous qualities is rather curious. The crow, that great benefactor to the entire race of fable writers, one day set himself to annoy the python, and declared that though he might think himself very big and very dangerous, he never killed anybody for all his biting. The sabba-gyi got very angry, and eventually spat up all his poison in a pet. It was swallowed by a great variety of other creeping things, and so the race of thanatophidians was vastly increased in numbers, if not in size, while the python would be harmless were it not for his vast strength.

Nevertheless the Tavoy fishermen make a domestic pet of him, and declare he is invaluable as a weather prophet. When they put out to sea they carry their boa with them, and he remains coiled up comfortably in the bows of the vessel until a storm is coming on. Then he promptly slips overboard and makes for the shore, and the sailors hoist sail and follow him with all possible expedition. The sabba-gyi is a much surer guide than the Meteorological Office. He is kept quite quiet and tame by being well fed on nutriment that does not excite his blood. His diet is usually eggs, with vast platters of pauk-pauk, "gummy rice," which is sufficiently heavy to deprive the eater, whether man or boa, of all desire to exert himself unduly. It is somewhat curious, as a first experience, to see the cat, the dog, and the

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825 baby curled up together in a corner with the boa, making one another mutually cosy.

[757] The gall-bladder and fat of the sabba-gyi are much prized for medicinal purposes, the fat especially being esteemed as a sovereign remedy for rheumatism and strains.

Of the poisonous snakes the most dreaded is the ngan, or u-gwet, the "spotted forehead." This creature, the hamadryad or ophiophagus, is, as his name imports, a cannibal, and lives on his neighbour snakes. Specimens as long as nine feet from nose to tail have been killed near Rangoon, and in the forests which are his proper home he sometimes grows to fourteen or fifteen feet. Unlike all other reptiles, the ngan does not get out of the way of a man approaching his haunts, but attacks him immediately. He is worse than the walrus that roused the indignation of the French poet.

Bees are kept in a good many places in the country, but it is necessary to be very careful where you put the hives. It is a most ill-omened circumstance if wild bees make a nest under the house, or if bees of any kind fly under the floor. On the other hand, a hive on the house-top is very lucky. Honey is in great request to present to the pôngyis at various feasts, and especially for the embalming of the [764] body of a dead brother of the Robe. After the cremation the honey is sold in the bazaar. It is not eaten by Englishmen in Burma. "Tapping the governor" does not commend itself to everybody. The hill tribes in the Shan States keep bees in hives made of blocks of wood.

757 Rhinoceros horns are in as great favour with the Burmans as with Chinese medical men. Shavings of the horn are considered an invaluable cure for epilepsy, and also guard against poisons of all kinds. There are two distinct species found in the eastern forests—the single and the double-horned.

3,5 787 Near Yenangyaung, in the petroleum district, when a new oil-well is wanted, the workmen place a marble image of an elephant on a smooth, flat stone, and surround it with gifts of all kinds, and then sit down to watch. If the elephant itself moves it indicates the direction in which borings are to be made; if not, the offering on which its shadow first falls as the sun sinks down, is marked, and a bedin sayā consulted.

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how the trouble increases when it comes to goats or any larger beasts. In the jungle villages meat of any kind at all is never seen: no animals of any kind are allowed to be killed. An officer travelling in the district would be reduced to what he could carry with him, if it were not for an Act of Government obliging villages to furnish—on payment, of course—supplies for officers and troops passing through. The mere fact of such a law being necessary is sufficient proof of the strength of the feeling against taking life.

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Of course, all shooting, either for sport or for food, is looked upon as disgraceful. In many jungle villages where deer abound there are one or two hunters who make a living by hunting. But they are disgraced men. They are worse than fishermen, and they will have a terrible penalty to pay for it all. It will take much suffering to wash from their souls the cruelty, the blood-thirstiness, the carelessness to suffering, the absence of compassion, that hunting must produce. 'Is there no food in the bazaar, that you must go and take the lives of animals?' has been said to me many a time. And when my house-roof was infested by sparrows, who dropped grass and eggs all over my rooms, so that I was obliged to shoot them with a little rifle, this was no excuse. 'You should have built a sparrow-cote,' they told me. 'If you had built a sparrow-cote, they would have gone away and left you in peace. They only wanted to make nests and lay eggs and have little ones, and you went and shot them.' There are many sparrow-cotes to be seen in the villages.

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I might give example after example of this sort, for they happen every day. We who are meat-eaters, who delight in shooting, who have a horror of insects and reptiles, are continually coming into collision with the principles of our neighbours; for even harmful reptiles they do not care to kill. Truly I believe it is a myth, the story of the Burmese mother courteously escorting out of the house the scorpion which had just bitten her baby. A Burmese mother worships her baby as much as the woman of any other nation does, and I believe there is no crime she would not commit in its behalf. But if she saw a scorpion walking about in the fields, she would not kill it as we should. She would step aside and pass on. 'Poor beast!' she would say, 'why should I hurt it? It never hurt me.'

The Burman never kills insects out of sheer brutality. If a beetle drone annoyingly, he will catch it in a handkerchief and put it outside, and so with a bee. It is a great trouble often to get your Burmese servants to keep your house free of ants and other annoying creatures. If you tell them to kill the insects they will, for in that case the sin falls on you. Without special orders they would rather leave the ants alone.

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In the district in which I am now living snakes are very plentiful. There are cobras and keraits, but the most dreaded is the Russell's viper. He is a snake that averages from three to four feet long, and is very thick, with a big head and a stumpy tail. His body is marked very prettily with spots and blurs of light on a dark, grayish green, and he

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is so like the shadows of the grass and weeds in a dusty road, that you can walk on him quite unsuspectingly. Then he will bite you, and you die. He comes out usually in the evening before dark, and lies about on footpaths to catch the home-coming ploughman or reaper, and, contrary to the custom of other snakes, he will not flee on hearing a footstep. When anyone approaches he lies more still than ever, not even a movement of his head betraying him. He is so like the colour of the ground, he hopes he will be passed unseen; and he is slow and lethargic in his movements, and so is easy to kill when once detected. As a Burman said, 'If he sees you first, he kills you; if you see him first, you kill him.'

In this district no Burman hesitates a moment in killing a viper when he has the chance. Usually he has to do it in self-defence. This viper is terribly feared, as over a hundred persons a year die here by his bite. He is so hated and feared that he has become an outcast from the law that protects all life.

But with other snakes it is not so. There is the hamadryad, for instance. He is a great snake about ten to fourteen feet long, and he is the only snake that will attack you first. He is said always to do so, certainly he often does. One attacked me once when out quail shooting. He put up his great neck and head suddenly at a distance of only five or six feet, and was just preparing to strike, when I literally blew his head off with two charges of shot.

You would suppose he was vicious enough to be included with the Russell's viper in the category of

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the exceptions, but no. Perhaps he is too rare to excite such fierce and deadly hate as makes the Burman forget his law and kill the viper. However it may be, the Burman is not ready to kill the hamadryad. A few weeks ago a friend of mine and myself came across two little Burman boys carrying a jar with a piece of broken tile over it. The lads kept lifting up the tile and peeping in, and then putting the tile on again in a great hurry, and their actions excited our curiosity. So we called them to come to us, and we looked into the jar. It was full of baby hamadryads. The lads had found a nest of them in the absence of the mother, who would have killed them if she had been there, and had secured all the little snakes. There were seven of them.

We asked the boys what they intended to do with the snakes, and they answered that they would show them to their friends in the village. 'And then?' we asked. And then they would let them go in the water. My friend killed all the hamadryads on the spot, and gave the boys some coppers, and we went on. Can you imagine this happening anywhere else? Can you think of any other schoolboys sparing any animal they caught, much less poisonous snakes? The extraordinary hold that this tenet of their religion has upon the Burmese must be seen to be understood. What I write will sound like some fairy story, I fear, to my people at home. It is far beneath the truth. The belief that it is wrong to take life is a belief with them as strong as any belief could be. I do not know anywhere any command, earthly or heavenly, that is acted up to with such earnestness as this command

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is amongst the Burmese. It is an abiding principle of their daily life.

Where the command came from I do not know. I cannot find any allusion to it in the life of the great teacher. We know that he ate meat. It seems to me that it is older even than he. It has been derived both by the Burmese Buddhists and the Hindus from a faith whose origin is hidden in the mists of long ago. It is part of that far older faith on which Buddhism was built, as was Christianity on Judaism.

But if not part of his teaching—and though it is included in the sacred books, we do not know how much of them are derived from the Buddha himself — it is in strict accordance with all his teaching. That is one of the most wonderful points of Buddhism, it is all in accordance; there are no exceptions.

I have heard amongst Europeans a very curious explanation of this refusal of Buddhists to take life. 'Buddhists,' they say, 'believe in the transmigration of souls. They believe that when a man dies his soul may go into a beast. You could not expect him to kill a bull, when perchance his grandfather's soul might inhabit there.' This is their explanation, this is the way they put two and two together to make five. They know that Buddhists believe in transmigration, they know that Buddhists do not like to take life, and therefore one is the cause of the other.

I have mentioned this explanation to Burmans while talking of the subject, and they have always laughed at it. They had never heard of it before.

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825 779 825 775 It is true that it is part of their great theory of life that the souls of men have risen from being souls of beasts, and that we may so relapse if we are not careful. Many stories are told of cases that have occurred where a man has been reincarnated as an animal, and where what is now the soul of a man used to live in a beast. But that makes no difference. Whatever a man may have been, or may be, he is a man now; whatever a beast may have been, he is a beast now. Never suppose that a Burman has any other idea than this. To him men are men, and animals are animals, and men are far the higher. But he does not deduce from this that man's superiority gives him permission to illtreat or to kill animals. It is just the reverse. It is because man is so much higher than the animal that he can and must observe towards animals the very greatest care, feel for them the very greatest compassion, be good to them in every way he can. The Burman's motto should be *Noblesse oblige;* he knows the meaning, if he knows not the words.

825 101 For the Burman's compassion towards animals goes very much farther than a mere reluctance to kill them. Although he has no command on the subject, it seems to him quite as important to treat animals well during their lives as to refrain from taking those lives. His refusal to take life he shares with the Hindu; his perpetual care and tenderness to all living creatures is all his own. And here I may mention a very curious contrast, that whereas in India the Hindu will not take life and the Mussulman will, yet the Mussulman is by reputation far kinder to his beasts than the Hindu. Here the

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Burman combines both qualities. He has all the kindness to animals that the Mahommedan has, and more, and he has the same horror of taking life that the Hindu has.

Coming from half-starved, over-driven India, it is a revelation to see the animals in Burma. The village ponies and cattle and dogs in India are enough to make the heart bleed for their sordid misery, but in Burma they are a delight to the eye. They are all fat, every one of them—fat and comfortable and impertinent; even the ownerless dogs are well fed. I suppose the indifference of the ordinary native of India to animal suffering comes from the evil of his own lot. He is so very poor, he has such hard work to find enough for himself and his children, that his sympathy is all used up. He has none to spare. He is driven into a dumb heartlessness, for I do not think he is actually cruel.

The Burman is full of the greatest sympathy towards animals of all kinds, of the greatest understanding of their ways, of the most humorously good-natured attitude towards them. Looking at them from his manhood, he has no contempt for them; but the gentle toleration of a father to very little children who are stupid and troublesome often, but are very lovable. He feels himself so far above them that he can condescend towards them, and forbear with them.

His ponies are pictures of fatness and impertinence and go. They never have any vice because the Burman is never cruel to them; they are never well trained, partly because he does not know how to train them, partly because they are so near the

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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2. Folk Feasts and Spirit Dances

According to legend, the Sanskrit drama was created in the Silver Age to cheer up the people, who were no longer happy as they were in the Golden Age; the Japanese drama was first used by the gods to beguile the sun-goddess to reappear; and the Chinese drama came into being as the result of the Emperor Yuen Tsaung ordering, in the eighth century after Christ, a group of children to be trained to sing the various deeds of the great national heroes before his consort, in appreciation of her love for him.[1] The Burmese, however, have no such legends, and the origins of their drama were in the religious *Nibhatkhin*. But before considering those Burmese miracle plays, perhaps it will not be out of place to give an account of the various folk feasts and spirit dances, which have in them elements essentially dramatic, and which gave some idea of the dramatic to the people and paved a way for the coming of the religious pageants and plays.

Folk feasts can be divided into two classes, those directly connected with Buddhism and those which are not. The Buddhist feasts occur on fixed dates and are celebrated all over the country. Of those, two are especially interesting, the feast of the Full Moon of the month of Tazaungmôn (which occurs in November) and the feast of the New Year (in April). Though the Full Moon of Tazaungmôn is an important Buddhist festival now, it is extremely probable that it was an important feast-day even before the introduction of Buddhism.[2] Special celebrations connected with the date have two distinct elements, the element of mimicry and the element of foolery. On that day, in the villages men dress themselves as animals, wearing appropriate masks, and dance through the village. The animal most commonly imitated is a sort of unicorn known to myth only. The desire to mimic animals probably came before the desire to mimic spirits, and I think the mimicry of animals, such as that we see in these celebrations, was the earliest attempt at the dramatic by the Burmese. Probably the mimicry of animals by men resulted in the presentation of animal puppet shows. In a Burmese puppet show, before the play begins, different animals come out one by

[1] A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*; F. A. Lombard, *Japanese Drama*; A. E. Zucker, *Chinese Theatre*.

[2] Some Buddhist festivals in Burma probably are of pre-Buddhist origins (cf. the English Christmas which has many elements derived from pre-Christian times). At least the special celebrations of Tazaungmôn described here are almost certainly pre-Buddhist.

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sheer wealth of imagination, no other play can surpass it: gods, demons, princes, soldiers, ogres, spirit-animals[1] fight and strive, entertaining the audience and holding its breathless interest. Moreover, each scene in the play is well constructed and dramatic. The dramatist seems to be bent on giving scene after scene of dramatic incident and dialogue. And to me the play is the most Burmese of U Kyin U's plays. The unreal world of romance and adventure in which the play moves lives in the imagination of the people. The very lack of logic in the play is typically Burmese; no other nation in the world loves life and laughter more than the Burmese, and yet they profoundly believe that life is one long pain and the cloister the only safe place of refuge from life.[2]

5. *Parpahein*

This play is U Kyin U's masterpiece.

It begins at once with a dramatic situation. The aged king, wishing to retire to the monastery, is looking for a successor. He has three sons, the eldest and the youngest being the sons of the chief queen, and the other, Parpahein, being the son of a junior queen. Because of his seniority in age and the seniority in rank of his mother, the eldest, Zayathein, should be the heir, but unfortunately for nursing him back to life, the king had long ago promised Parpahein's mother that the throne would be given to Parpahein. To make the problem more difficult, Parpahein, strong and cruel, roams about the country with his drunken followers, and the ministers are against his succession, for it is very probable that the kingdom would go to rack and ruin if the throne were given to him. The king holds his final audience to appoint his successor, and Parpahein and his mother appear on the scene. The mother is uncertain as to what course she should take. She wants her son to be king, but at the same time realizes that public opinion is against him. In the end, at her son's request, she demands the throne for him in full audience. The king tries to argue with her and offers to give Parpahein a province. The queen returns to her son greatly disappointed, but realizing that the fiery nature of Parpahein will lead him into danger unless he is pacified, tries to soothe him and advises him to give up all attempts to become king. However, he thinks that the throne is worth all risks and

[1] For example, the *galôn* and the *naga* which possess supernatural powers in Burmese mythology.

[2] A translation of the play is given in appendix iii.

[825]

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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without ever knowing or caring for the European drama itself, the Burmese may have borrowed their puppets and puppet stage-craft, without ever caring for the shadow drama itself. Such borrowings were possible although the shadow drama itself never reached Burma, for Burmese trading or raiding expeditions were in continuous contact with Siam, and to a lesser extent with Malaya and the East Indies. 536 * 101 177

1. (*a*) The Burmese puppets are worked in delicate detail, and are similar in this and other respects to the Javanese and Siamese figures.

(*b*) But the Burmese puppets are worked by strings, whereas most other eastern puppets are moved by sticks from below. However, some puppets of India and China are stringed.

2. (*a*) The Burmese puppet show-men make offerings to the spirits before a performance. Such offerings are also made in Java before the presentation of a shadow play.

(*b*) But, although the offerings are not made particularly to the thirty-seven *nats*, it may be that the puppet show-men, who consider their calling to be just a branch of the acting profession, are only following the custom of the living actors.

3. (*a*) The puppet show begins with dances by animals, which are perhaps reminiscent of the Javanese 'fantastic vine' with birds and monkeys on it. A monkey appears among the Burmese puppets. [825] ●

(*b*) But Burmese folk feasts occasioned mimicry of animals, and that practice may have influenced the puppet show. Moreover, the Burmese animal puppets consist, in addition to the monkey, of the tiger, the elephant, and the horse. The *sangyee* has no counterpart in the Javanese show, and the Burmese show has no bird puppets.

4. (*a*) Burmese women are not admitted to membership of a puppet troupe, and are not allowed to step on the puppet stage, even when no actual performance is in progress. Is this reminiscent of the Java show, where women are not allowed to see the actual puppets perform? [462]

(*b*) But the practice may have been only an attempt by men to reserve the profession for themselves.

5. (*a*) An appropriate tune to identify a new animal puppet is played in Burma. This is perhaps akin to the Javanese practice of identifying a new figure that has entered by the orchestra playing a special tune. [533]

(*b*) But the practice of identifying a new scene (which is almost the same as identifying a new figure) by an appropriate tune has always existed in the performances of living actors, and the puppet show-men may have borrowed it.

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
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787 826 Omens are read from the position of mongoloid spots on the newborn baby's body. They are said to represent marks put on in a previous existence and their presence proves the child was then a human being. A blue spot on the foot presages a life of travel. Any marks leading from the right shoulder to the left hip, the line that the royal riband takes, indicate a royal future; today, however, with no royalty in Burmese society, such marks merely forecast a "great" future for the child.

775 826 A child is constantly watched from the time of birth for signs of whose reincarnation it represents. This is a constant topic in the family conversations.

Any disfigurement in a newborn child is regarded as a carry-over of the parents' store of demerit, as well as that of the child, from previous existences. It is regarded with a sense of shame and sorrow.

845 Although multiple births are neither preferred nor desired, they are not looked upon with any marked anxiety nor are there any supernatural means employed to prevent them.

766 In the event of a stillborn baby, the corpse is given special treatment. It is kept in a case, clothed and powdered, and a tray of food is set in front of it every day. It is considered auspicious to care for a stillborn child in this manner: the spirits will guide the parents in their dreams toward the attainment of material prosperity.

751 854 [825] [753] For the normal baby who survives, a number of things are done by Burmese parents to protect it from malevolent influences. Before it is a month old, a tiger bone is ground on a stone, together with a little water, and mixed with honey. This is fed to the child to ward off a mysterious infant illness associated with the tiger. A connection is believed to exist between the tiger and convulsions; some parents place a tiger skin under the mattress of the baby's bed to guard against such illness. A knife placed under the baby's mattress is said to protect against illness in general.

To insure good health and well-being for the child, a white thread over which certain *mantras* have been recited may be given by a Buddhist monk and tied around the baby's wrists. Should a baby be admired by people for its growth, the thread may be left on to neutralize the harm that is believed to result from such expressions.

[278] When the child's umbilical cord has dried and fallen off, it is kept and used as a medicine for any illness that befalls the child. A little of it is ground up and mixed with water for such purposes.

000 A very close connection is believed to exist between mother and child during